

and another directing funds to farmers on the basis of race. So we are talking about blatantly unconstitutional discrimination.

Fortunately, the independent judiciary has stepped in to stop it. Over the last few weeks, multiple Federal courts have struck down these provisions, including an appeals panel led by Judge Amul Thapar from my home State of Kentucky. But these are hardly the only instances in which Washington Democrats have tried to impose their own radical preferences on ordinary Americans.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later today, the Senate will vote on the nomination of Kiran Ahuja, President Biden's choice to serve as head of the Office of Personnel Management. This is the position responsible for making hiring, payroll, and training decisions that affect literally millions of Federal employees.

The President's nominee has made statements expressing sympathy for the discredited, ahistorical claims about our Nation's origins that form the backbone of so-called critical race theory. One major organization of Federal employees expressed its concern about the nominee's capacity for "neutrality, fairness, and impartiality." I share those concerns, and I will be voting against this nomination.

Still elsewhere in the Biden administration, efforts to subvert the basic understanding of our founding principles are already well underway. The Department of Education's latest "proposed priorities" run roughshod over existing history and civic programs—established with bipartisan support—in order to push critical race theory on public school students and keep pace with "woke" sensibilities.

American students deserve a rock-solid civics education grounded in actual facts, not divisive propaganda that tells them they are little more than a product of their racial background. That is the basis of new legislation I was proud to help introduce this week. Schools that choose to trade in fact-based curricula for activist propaganda like the 1619 Project forfeit their right to receive Federal education grant funding for those teachings.

The current administration came to power on the promise to unify a divided nation. It will be judged closely and carefully on how that power is used.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the

Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Lina M. Khan, of New York, to be a Federal Trade Commissioner for the unexpired term of seven years from September 26, 2017.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, unfortunately, predictions about the negative economic effects of the so-called American Rescue Plan seem to be coming true.

In March, Democrats pushed through this massive partisan spending bill. They claimed it was urgently needed COVID funding. In reality, the bill was filled with unnecessary spending, from a staggering \$350 billion slush fund for States, a majority of which didn't need any more government money to weather the rest of the pandemic, to almost \$129 billion for schools, even though schools had spent just a tiny fraction of the tens of billions of dollars Congress had already given them.

At the time, Republicans warned about the bill's level of spending. More than just one liberal economist warned about the size of Democrats' spending plan, with former Obama adviser Larry Summers noting that the bill could "set off inflationary pressures of a kind we have not seen in a generation."

Well, it turns out he was right to be worried. Last week, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released its report on May's consumer prices, and the news was not good. Inflation reached its highest level in nearly 13 years, with consumer prices up 5 percent from a year ago. Core inflation, a measure of inflation that excludes food and energy prices, soared to its highest level in nearly three decades.

And what does that mean? Well, higher prices for Americans. The price of everything from bikes to bacon has shot up. Auto insurance costs 17 percent more than it did a year ago. Used cars cost 30 percent more. Shoes and whole milk cost 7 percent more. Inflation is starting to look like it could become nontransitory, or what most Americans call a serious problem.

And Democrats' government spending spree is contributing, but, of course, that is not causing Democrats to hit pause on the economic overstimulation. Democrats are looking at more trillion-plus-dollar spending bills.

The President just released a budget proposing to hike government spending by trillions of dollars over the next 10

years. Under the President's plan, the Federal budget would be \$6 trillion for fiscal year 2022, rising to \$8.2 trillion for fiscal year 2031. Now, to put those numbers in perspective, the entire Federal budget for 2019 came to \$4.4 trillion. The President is proposing to nearly double that by 2031.

It is disturbing that the overspending in the American Rescue Plan hasn't made Democrats think twice about future government sprees, but it is not all that surprising because in the Democratic Party these days, dogma tends to triumph over reality—or practicality. Democrats are ever more fanatically committed to expanding government and taxing Americans, and they are not slowed down by little details like damaging the economy.

Take the increased unemployment benefits situation. Congress provided a Federal increase in unemployment benefits early in the pandemic when businesses were closed and workers had few alternatives to keep their families afloat, but as early as last fall, there were signs that our economy was rebounding. And with the arrival of the COVID vaccines, it became clear that America would be able to get fully back to work sooner rather than later.

But Democrats insisted on continuing the increased unemployment benefits until September of 2021, and the effect has been predictable. Despite record-high job openings, many people are declining to return to work because they can make more money staying home and drawing unemployment benefits.

Businesses hit hard by the pandemic are desperate to return to full operating capacity, but they are being slowed down by the fact that they can't find workers. In response to the worker shortage, a number of Governors around the country decided to stop accepting the Federal increase in unemployment benefits. They wanted to help businesses in their States and get their residents back to work.

And how did Democrats respond to that? Well, more than one Democrat responded by suggesting that the Federal Government step in to make sure these payments continue. That is right. Despite evidence that the increased unemployment benefits were discouraging workers from going back to work, some Democrats wanted to prevent Governors from halting these payments.

Nowhere is Democrats' devotion to dogma over reality more notable than in their proposed capital gains tax hike. Now, I don't need to tell anyone that "tax the rich" has become the rallying cry of the Democratic Party. And one of the ways that the President plans to tax well-off Americans is by doubling the top capital gains rate to almost 40 percent.

The problem is that a 40-percent capital gains rate substantially exceeds the revenue-maximizing rate. In non-accountant speak, what that means is that Democrats could collect more